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# Lightning Bolt #10 Strikes Fast !!!

If you ask members of the acquisition community where the Lightning Bolt #10 team should focus their attention—where are the most promising areas for reducing cycle time—you're likely to get as many different opinions as you do answers. Everybody seems to have an opinion.

This was just one of the challenges Col Ben McCarter and the rest of the LB 10 team faced early on. But since resolving the statement and scope issues, the team has progressed quickly to make reduced cycle time a reality. The team has planned a busy summer, and they'll complete their efforts in early September.

The LB 10 team is made up of 18 members from SAF/AQ, AFMC, ASC, DLA, and DSMC (see box) and has had weekly

meetings since early April. One of the first things the team did was finalize the LB 10 statement and scope (see box). The team also agreed to the goals of the LB. What the LB 10 team hopes to do is capture best practices and


new ideas for reducing cycle time through interviews, government and industry workshops, and research. Once captured, the team will assess and categorize each idea to see where it fits within the team's deliverables. Categories of ideas might include sole source awards, *Continued on page 2*

News From

# AFA R

Air Force Acquisition Reform

Volume 2 Number 2 May/June 1996



## Lightning Bolt #11: UNDERWAY !!!

***LIGHTNING BOLT #11 -- Enhance the capabilities of our laboratories by adopting improved business processes learned from our weapon system acquisition reform***

Enhance the capabilities of our laboratories by adopting improved business processes learned from our weapon system acquisition reform efforts.

Lightning Bolt #11 offers an opportunity to expedite the full range of S&T business processes, with the primary objectives of (a) reducing cycle times and documentation associated with those *Continued on page 3*

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RFP preparation, contract changes, limited competition, among others.

The team plans to deliver a final report and a best practices guide as well as content for the Defense

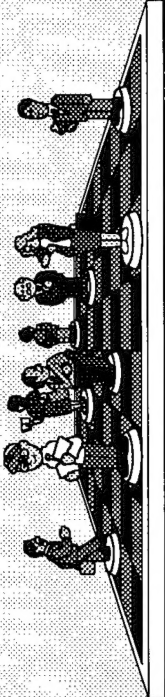
Acquisition Deskbook. These deliverables will provide a "toolbox" from which the acquisition community can draw for ideas and practices that allow contracts to be awarded faster, better, and cheaper. The team decided early on that they did not want to establish policy—they felt new policy would be counter to the ideals of acquisition reform. Rather, through the Deskbook, the team can allow access to good ideas without limiting the flexibility of program officials.

The team is planning to conduct interviews throughout the summer, and may have several conferences in order to get feedback from both government and industry. Additional details on LB 10 are available on the SAF/AQ WWW site.❖

### Team Members

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 Maj Mark Ashpole, SAF/AQSC  
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### Lightning Bolt #10 - Reduce Cycle Time

#### *Reduce time from requirement definition to contract award*

Reduce by 50% the amount of time to award contracts that meet our customers' needs. This time begins with receipt of a validated user requirement and funding commitment and ends with contract award. Lightning Bolt # 10 applies the efforts to develop and acquire systems, and support their operational readiness. Our customers include operational users and our partners in industry.

# Logistics and Acquisition Offsite

Mr. Money and Lieutenant General George T. Babbitt, DCS/Logistics, co-chaired a Logistics and Acquisition Offsite March 10-12, 1996, at the Aspen Institute, Queenstown, Maryland. Attendees included SAF/AQ and AF/LG senior staff, PEOs, DACs/ALC/CCs, MADs, AFMC two-letters, DSMC/CM and three single managers.

The offsite provided an opportunity to focus the combined talents and expertise of the Air Force's senior acquisition and logistics leadership on key issues impacting both groups. The objective of the offsite was to enhance the way acquisition and logistics do business as a community, in support of the warfighters, by focusing on issue resolution.

The offsite kicked off with opening comments by Mr. Money and Lt Gen Babbitt. Guest speaker Col Larry "Scoop" Cooper, F-16 Single Manager, gave a lively and informative presentation on "A Single Manager's Perspective." Offsite participants then broke into work groups, reviewed decision briefings and point papers developed by pre-offsite workgroups on issues, alternatives, and

recommendations associated with the topic areas, then developed specific recommendations and action items for the five topic areas as listed below:

- LG and AQ Strategic Plans
- Financial Process Challenges of the Single Manager
- Impacts of Depot Privatization on Acquisition and Logistics Processes, SMs and Centers
- Applicability of Acquisition Reform Initiatives to Logistics and Sustainment Areas
- Impacts and Timing of Logistics and Sustainment Decisions on the Acquisition Process and of Acquisition Decisions on the Logistics and Sustainment Process

The offsite concluded with each topic area team chief presenting and leading a discussion on their team's recommendations and action items.

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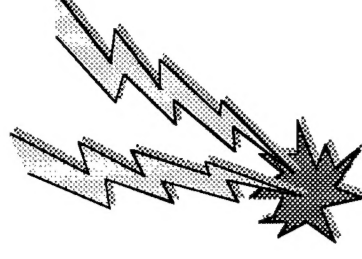
## Lightning Bolt #11 -- UNDERWAY!!!

*continued from page 1*

processes, and (b) adopting common business processes across our laboratories.

SAF/AQ has appointed Maj Gen Dick Paul, AF Technology Executive Officer (HQ AFMC/ST), as the Air Force Lightning Bolt #11 lead. Gen Paul assembled teams across the laboratories and AFOSR to examine S&T-related business processes. Each team was headed by a HQ AFMC functional representative. The teams generated over 90 potential initiatives which were then evaluated during senior-level reviews. From these, Gen Paul has synthesized a family of high-payoff initiatives under the theme: "Better, Faster, Cheaper."

Gen Paul will brief the Lightning Bolt #11 plan to Mr. Art Money, AF Assistant Secretary (Acquisition) (SAF/AQ), in early June as the final step before formal implementation. After SAF/AQ's go-ahead, the most current Lightning Bolt #11 information will be available on the Air Force S&T WWW public website. ❖

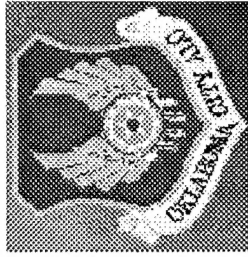




# Education and Training Effort Advances

by Larry Belcher

*Tinker Take Off staff writer*



**TINKER AIR FORCE BASE, Okla. (AFMC-NS)**—Plans are proceeding for education and training of employees

who will work in the new acquisition environment that is developing in response to the Air Force's nine Lightning Bolt initiatives announced last year to speed acquisition reform.

Those plans took a leap forward Jan 10-11 when 24 representatives from several Air Force Materiel Command organizations met at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla.

Two integrated product teams are focusing on Lightning Bolt #9, according to Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center employee and Lightning Bolt #9 team member, Tom Ellis. "We're defining what

skills, knowledge and know-how employees will need to work in the acquisition world of the future," Ellis said.

"The team decided to concentrate on three areas: acquisition-reform initiatives established by law, direction, or policy," said Col Robert Wright, chief of Acquisition Reform at Air Force Materiel Command headquarters, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, and Lightning bolt #9 integrated product team leader.

"We also asked the single program managers for their areas of interest and concerns. With that information, we began to work out which areas necessitated immediate training," Wright said.

The team's discussions also focused on the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act, the other eight Lightning Bolts, the contracting process, the Single Acquisition Management Plan and the Defense Acquisition Board review process. The

working group considered policy changes and what the work force needs to know about those policy changes.

"Once the workable and immediate training requirements were agreed on, we discussed education and training development and presentation methods," Wright said.

The team is developing innovative ways of presenting acquisition-reform topics to the work force, said LB #9 team publicist 2nd Lt. Debi Dickensheets. "Some organizations offer acquisition reform videos and monthly letters from the center commander on hot topics," Dickensheets said.

"One center is working through the local Chamber of Commerce to provide acquisition-awareness training to local industry. Another center hosts a town hall meeting to inform personnel on the new acquisition-reform initiatives." ♦

## *Logistics and Acquisition Offsite continued from page 3*

Lt Gen Babbitt stated he couldn't have been more pleased with the outcome, and given the success of the Offsite, this is something which should be continued in the future. Mr. Money stated the participants met the objectives of the Offsite in enhancing communications and harmonizing relations between AQ and LG. The task is now to look to the results of the recommendations made. Mr. Money announced a follow-on Logistics and Acquisition Offsite to review progress on implementing the recommendations.

The follow-on Offsite will be held at Aspen Institute, 30 Oct - 1 Nov 1996. More details will be provided as plans develop. In the meantime, questions or comments may be directed to the Offsite action officers: Lt Col Fred Gebhart, AF/LGMY (703-697-9232, DSN 227) or Maj Sandra Ludwig, SAF/AQXA (703-693-3212, DSN 223). A copy of the Offsite Report Executive Summary, including action items, is available on the SAF/AQ WWW Home Page. A copy of the full report can be obtained from the action officers. ♦



# "Reengineering Efforts Keep Program on Schedule"

by Kevin Gilmartin  
ESC Public Affairs

When a shortage of engineers threatened the schedule of a Standard Systems Group program, officials looked to principles of Electronic Systems Center's reengineering efforts for a solution.

The problem for the Air Force Command and Control Network, managed by SSG at Gunter Annex of Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, was that only nine of 20 authorized positions in the program office were filled, and most of the vacancies were engineering positions.

Compounding the problem was the requirement that a government engineer be at every AFC2N site installation to perform test and integration procedures, and oversee the contractor and the installation efforts of the 38th Engineering Installation Wing.

With the available engineering staff stretched to its limit traveling on temporary duties around the world, the installation rate of AFC2N equipment was down to only three bases

per month. Because there were 30 installations left in Phase II, the completion date of September 1996 was going to slip by two months, which would also impact Phase III.

Following a strategy consistent with acquisition reform and reengineering efforts, program officials reduced the requirement to have a government engineer on site to oversee the project, and instead allowed qualified contractors to perform testing and installation. Functionality of the system was checked from the AFC2N Network Operations Control Center at SSG headquarters.

This corrective action, along with scheduling installations back-to-back, has reduced over-all TDY costs, shortened the schedule and allowed installations to be decoupled so one installation schedule slip does not impact the overall program schedule.

"By using 'out-of-the-box thinking', focusing manpower on high risk enterprises and trusting the contractor to successfully install the equipment, this program was able to get back on schedule," said Col

Harvey Greenberg, director of Program Management in the Engineering Directorate. "The program succeeded so far by doing less, which is what acquisition reform and reengineering are all about."

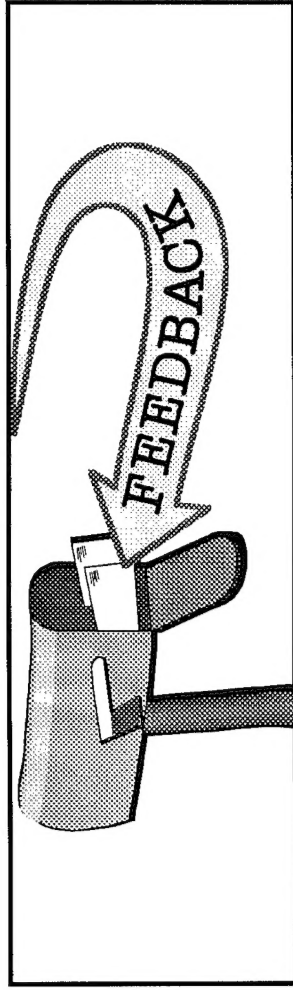
While this new approach is underway, program officials are steadily filling empty positions, and the outlook for the future strength of the program office is bright.

AFC2N provides Air Force command and control sites with reliable, secure, high-speed communications among major command work stations and the command's host processor, between remote sites and their command's host, and between AFC2N and global command and control system nodes. Program manager at Gunter is Capt Jerry J. Kanski. ♦

## NewsBits: News and events from the world of Acquisition Reform



- **SAMP Policy Guide:** The new guide was signed on 29 April 1996. It is available for downloading now on the SAF/AQ Homepage under the Policy page.
- **Deskbook:** The Defense Acquisition Deskbook—a software tool that consists of an electronic library, a software tool list, and an "on-line" program managers forum—is scheduled for initial release in May 96. It will be distributed on CD-ROM and through FTP. It will include the new 5000 Series, complete text of the FAR and the DFARS, plus other documents identified by OUSD(A&T).



I'm trying to understand what the Cost/Performance IPT in the new DoD 5000.2-R is. It sounds like it's established by the OIPT with the PM as the lead. The group's function is to recommend cost and performance trade-offs to the PM. Is this a group internal to the SPO, a subset of the Working Level IPT, or another IPT supporting the program? How can the PM be the lead if the recommendation of the group goes to the PM? Cost/Performance trade-offs sounds like a function that can be performed by the Working Level IPT — a separate IPT might not be necessary.

Excellent question. Since last summer, one of AQ's major concerns during the IPT implementation process has been that OSD's approach relies heavily on multiple PM-led IPTs for each program at the Working-Level. This approach presents unique challenges to the Air Force acquisition community considering our organizational manning and cultural differences.

The short answer to the question is that CPIPT functions can and should be accomplished by the Working-Level IPT (WIPT). AQ supports a single WIPT per program, with working groups or sub-IPTs as key components. The CPIPT and other OSD-directed acquisition IPTs are encompassed within this purview, as subsets, of the single focal point: the program's WIPT. OSD's concept of an Integrating IPT is similar, but refers only to those issues "requiring integration" between the various WIPTs. The AF believes all issues require integration and needs the strong, central role of a single WIPT. As has been previously established,

leadership of the WIPT is typically the SAF/AQ lead PEM's Division Chief. The concept of "tactical lead" has been established to support successful preparation for major milestone decisions by taking advantage of the PM's better "situational awareness" for actions that must be accomplished.

While we are major supporters of the IPT process and very much agree with most of the OSD IPT guidance, their multiple WIPT approach, characterized in both the new 5000 series and in their "Rules of the Road" guide, was difficult for the AF to implement due to: (1) The simple confusion caused by multiple WIPTs — "I didn't know there was an F-22 IPT meeting this week at WPAFB!" ...only to find out its an F-22 Logistics Management IPT meeting. (2) The "travel" drain on our PMs and their staffs — having to support too many "Washington" meetings. (3) The direct conflict with CSAF's "Enhanced Corporate Structure" construct — each program will have a single IPT focal point. This topic will be covered further in our IPT guidance supplement to existing OSD guidance; which is in final coordination and will be published ASAP.

**The background on the Homepage looks nice, but it makes reading the text very difficult. The colors of the links are unusual and there doesn't seem to be any consistency. Sometimes, because of the graphics and pictures, it is very slow. Can't you do something about these problems?**

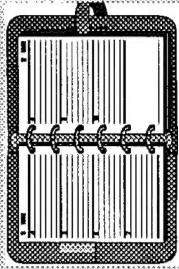
While most people don't experience any of these problems, there is something YOU can do about each of them. First, make sure you're running a 256 color video driver. Virtually every computer sold in the last four years is capable of 256 colors, but sometimes the system administrators don't install the drivers on your

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## Datebook:

### Upcoming Events From The World of Acquisition Reform



The JAST 96 Conference will be held in conjunction with the AHS 52nd Annual Forum and Technology Display. JAST 96,

Developing the Future Joint Air Strike Weapons Systems, will focus on the principal joint-service airborne weapon systems. The conference will feature leading DoD, military, and industry speakers on JAST concept definition and design; common airframes, engines, avionics, and weapon systems; and technical presentations. The conference will be held on 5 June 1996 in Washington, D.C. For additional information, call AHS at (703) 684-6777.

The 13th Annual Program Managers Symposium, entitled

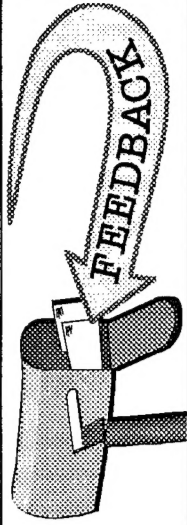
Government and Industry Partners in Reform will be held at Ft. Belvoir, VA from 17-19 June 1996. Speakers, panels, and workshops will address the theme and present views from government agencies, OSD, the Services, and industry. Representatives from industry, federal agencies, and DoD will discuss the impact and importance of acquisition reform implementation. For additional information, contact the DASC Alumni Association, (800) 755-8805, (301) 309-9125 or fax (301) 309-0817.

The 1996 Modeling, Simulation and Virtual Prototype Conference: A

Forum for the Advancement of Modeling and Simulation Applications and Technology in the Acquisition Process. Sponsored by the American Society of Naval Engineers. The conference will be held on 24-26 June 1996 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Crystal City, VA. Call (703) 836-6727, fax (703) 836-7491. ♦

## Feedback

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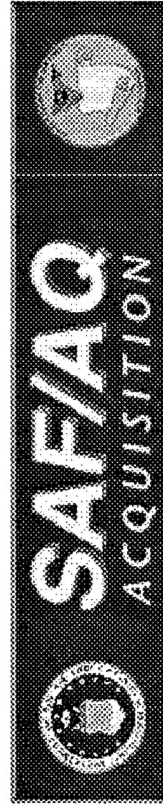
machine. Call your system admin folks and have them install a better driver. If you still have trouble reading the text, most browsers have an option to turn off backgrounds. In Netscape you can do this by going to the Options Menu, selecting General Preferences, and then choosing the Colors Tab. Define the background and link colors to suit your own tastes.

You also control the colors of the links (and the text and the background and the ...). Just select Options at the top of the toolbar and then click on Preferences. Pick the tab marked Colors and you can be as creative as you want.

Finally, you can set the options on your browser to not load images unless you explicitly ask for them. In Netscape you can do this by going to the Options Menu, selecting General Preferences, and then choosing Images, which gets set to "After Loading". ♦

Submit your SAF/AQ and acquisition-related questions to:

<http://www.safaq.hq.af.mil/>





# Mediocre Performance — A Hidden Barrier to Reform

by Terry Little

**H**umorist Garrison Keillor's stories center around the mythical town of Lake Wobegone—a town where, among other things, "all the children are above average." Amazing. But, wonder of wonders, it's a phenomenon alive and well within our acquisition workforce as well as with Lake Wobegone's children. This is an obvious conclusion judging from the distribution of performance ratings that military and civilians within the acquisition workforce get. My guess is that fully 70% of our officers have been in the "top 10%" for OPR purposes and that 75% of the annual civilian ratings are "excellent" or better. Likewise we find that virtually everyone who is breathing will get some kind of performance award once their turn comes or it's time for them to PCS. While inflated ratings and undeserved awards may make the employees who get them feel better and may diminish supervisor angst, acquisition managers' widespread failure to deal with mediocre performance is an institutional and cultural problem—a problem that is a major barrier to reform in a downsized environment. It's also a problem that doesn't require any regulatory or policy changes to fix—one that every single acquisition supervisor can solve without getting anyone's permission.

Probably all of us have had the experience of seeing the weak and sometimes pitiful performance of some individuals at the GS-14/15 or O-5/O-6 grades and wondered how in the world these people ever got promoted to so senior a level. In some cases it was undoubtedly because these people were once good performers, but have since retired on the job or reached their level of incompetence. However, more often, it is because their supervisors along the way simply lacked the guts to do what supervisors are supposed to do: to wit (1) set clear and high performance standards, (2) give timely, unambiguous performance feedback and (3) render performance evaluations that are fair and reflective of actual performance relative to the standards. Pretty basic stuff!

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## About News From AFAR

News From AFAR is produced by SAF/AQX as an informal way of disseminating important acquisition reform related information. It is an electronic publication produced both in Adobe Acrobat format, and in a World Wide Web compatible format. The Acrobat version is sent by email to the members of our distribution list: Single Managers, DACs, PEOs, and Mission Area Directors.

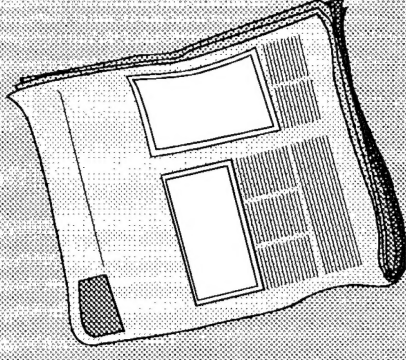
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You can either download the newsletter, or view it on line. If you need the Adobe Acrobat Reader, it's there too. Instructions are available on the News From AFAR page of the Web site.

If you don't have access to the Web, check with your computer support people about getting access. If that doesn't work, just drop an email to the address below.

News from AFAR is only useful if it meets your needs. If you would like to contribute material, submit questions, or you have comments on the Newsletter, please contact the editor:

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# Mediocre Performance — A Hidden Barrier to Reform

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Let's quit fooling ourselves. It's not a pretty thought, but we can no longer gain-say that we have a systemic problem of too many mediocre performers in the acquisition workforce. No, I'm not talking about those isolated really bad performers—those with alcohol, drug, attendance, laziness or terminal stupidity problems. No, I'm talking about those whom we would typically describe as "just OK"—not good, but not bad either. Perhaps 40-50% of the workforce may fit in this category

(though the density seems higher in some offices than others). It's a dirty little secret, but in the past we have too often compensated for the mediocre performers by simply getting more people to take up the slack and/or overloading those people who were truly star performers.

Big, high visibility programs can compensate by hand-picking people, but what about everyone else? The Pareto effect where 20% of the people do 80% of the work is one that we have become accustomed to and accept. Let's stop! In a downsized environment we can no longer afford this inefficiency. We must "raise the bar" and elevate our standards of excellence. Why? First, to motivate everyone in the downsized workforce to work to their full potentials. And

second to better discriminate between mediocrity and excellence when it comes time to make promotion, assignment and retention decisions. When a supervisor gives a good rating to a civilian or a flowery OPR to an officer whose performances are really mediocre then there are three transmitted messages—all bad. The first is a message to the ratee that the supervisor has a low standard of excellence—so low that the ratee can exceed the standard without breaking a sweat.

force when someone gets an undeserved award. It cannot help but make a good performer skeptical that the supervisor really does discriminate between "just acceptable" and "above-and-beyond." The third bad message is the one that the supervisor gives the system. Simply put, that message is "take my responsibility for a quality workforce and shove it!" It is a blatant, gutless abrogation of a fundamental supervisory responsibility.

In the end we as supervisors get from people what performance they believe we expect. There will always be a few star performers and slugs no matter the expectations, but the vast majority of people in the

acquisition workforce are willing to do whatever it takes to please the boss. Low expectations=low median performance; high expectations=high median performance. And guess what? If almost everyone exceeds expectations then it is a sign, not of good people, but that expectations are too low. There's no law of nature that says that the standards of excellence

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***While inflated ratings and undeserved awards may make the employees who get them feel better and may diminish supervisor angst, acquisition managers' widespread failure to deal with mediocre performance is an institutional and cultural problem—a problem that is a major barrier to reform in a downsized environment.***

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# Mediocre Performance — A Hidden Barrier to Reform

*continued from page 9*

within the Government have to be low—no policy that equates inflating ratings and giving undeserved awards with “taking care of people”—and no regulation that decrees that everyone needs to be happy with their annual appraisals or OPRs. My proposal is simple. Whatever your expectations for employee performance, raise them. Today. Then communicate those heightened expectations through frequent, individual, face-to-face, candid, feedback—not via pabulum, Dr Feelgood cheerleading—not against some contrived BS written standards that a corpse could exceed—and not through

*That's how it should be. It's time to  
make it the way that it is.  
After all, that's what reform is about—  
making what should be, what is!*

impersonal, philosophical group lectures that make people wonder whom we are really talking to. That done, then it's up to the individual worker to decide what to do. Essentially we can distill the decision to four choices: The worker (1) can merely meet the heightened expectations and expect a description of “average” or (2) exceed the expectations and expect to be in the small group who get rewards and good report cards or (3) go find another job where presumably the standards for performance are lower or (4) fail to meet the standards and live with the consequences—consequences that should

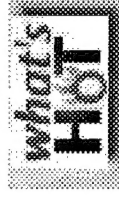
be substantial and sure. That's how it should be. It's time to make it the way that it is. After all, that's what reform is about—making what should be, what is!❖



Welcome to the Air Force Acquisition  
Home Page

shop talk

What's New



Keeping up with SAF/AQ and Acquisition Reform has never been easier, thanks to the World Wide Web. You can reach the SAF/AQ web-site by entering the following URL (uniform resource locator) into your favorite browser (Netscape recommended) :

**<http://www.safaq.hq.af.mil/>**